Historical Society of Palm Desert

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The Hourglass

Community
Service
Collections
Archives

FALL 2007

VOL. 14, NO. 3

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30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
"Art and Wine"
Saturday -- Sept. 29 -- 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

President/Chairman Dick Folkers invites everyone to join this gala event as the Society celebrates three decades of preserving Palm Desert's local history. Come to the historic fire museum and enjoy a couple of fun-filled hours with friends. This social will feature an art show, wine tasting, light hors d'oeuvres, beverages, and a museum tour.

$5.00 for Society members
$10 for non-members
New members who sign up that evening will be admitted free of charge.

For reservations please call Anne Tuttle at 346-6588.

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DESERT ARTIST -- CARL BRAY

Compiled from Society archive by V. Folkers

As you travel Highway 111 through Indian Wells, you will see a wooden weather-beaten sign in the shape of a painter's palette; it reads: Carl Bray - Art Gallery. The desert home behind the sign sets us to wondering about this man and his work. Why is this antique structure situated on the edge of a modern golf course? Is there some unique history involved here? Let's investigate!

Carl Bray was born in Prague, Oklahoma ... in beautiful Ozark country. His first official painting consisted of a log cabin set in a snowy landscape, a work executed for his grandmother at the tender age of 9 years. During the great Depression he studied art at Miami College, financing his education with $1.00 a day harvesting wheat or 50 cents a day doing general farm work. With borrowed money he moved West in 1936 to seek work. Jobs were few and far between, but his search ended in Indio where the Southern Pacific railroad hired him ... a job he held for 40 years.

Carl married Luella in 1939, and she has been his right-hand helpmate over the years. Bray spent the World War II years working in Los Angeles with the railroad, returning to the desert on weekends to paint. He claims his work has been influenced by other desert artists like Fredrick Chisnall, Russell Swan, Maynard Dixon, and he was particularly encouraged by Jon Gnagy, an art teacher on NBC television.

After the war, Bray continued to work the rail yards in Indio. He bought a piece of land to the west along Highway 111 for $1,000. During the early 1950s he designed and built a house and gallery, and the area became part of old Indian Wells. There were other cabins, two groceries, two gas stations, a dance hall, a café, and a corral where tourists paid 25 cents to see rattlesnakes. By the early 1960s, most of these other buildings had been demolished and the Bray's home sat all alone in a half-mile stretch. Here they raised their four youngsters and sold Carl's paintings. Later on he started another gallery in Taos, New Mexico, where his family spent summers during the really hot desert temperatures.

Carl Bray (continued):
Visitors would stop by to view and sometimes purchase Bray's artwork. He was host to Hopalong Cassidy, Tommy Tune, Gosden Freeman, and others. For years he would plant an American and a Canadian flag along the highway, and often sat before his easel in his front yard painting his own personal landscape. Most of the paintings were desert scenes, interspersed with a few horseback riders and an occasionally some trains. Usually his mind stayed with the by-gone desert of natural plants and animal life ... the unspoiled land. The smoke tree with its wispy foliage became his specialty, which he rendered in pastel hues of gray, green, blue, orange and white. Bray surmises that he has painted over 6,500 smoke trees.

Since Indian Wells incorporated as a city in 1967, development has blossomed. These days the Bray house has a golf course in the back, a state-of-the-art tennis stadium on the other side of the highway, and shopping centers down the road. Carl and Luella no longer live in the quaint residence; when Carl turned 83 in May of 2000 they sold the place and moved to Banning. They didn't, however, sell to just anybody. Rick and Vickie Brown live in the home in its historic state and they keep the gallery open. People wishing to see the artwork can make appointments for viewing and purchasing on weekends. Internet sales have brought popularity to the artist, but there always seems to be new works for his galleries, shows, and receptions.

Bray says he never tires of putting brush to masonite, his canvas of choice. The beautiful, impressionistic paintings which he has created number well over 20,000 since his first rendering of the log cabin in the snow. He keeps trying to paint a better picture, and can't wait to see how it turns out.

JOHN HILTON
A Man of Many Talents

Though you may not have noticed, this famous desert artist has been in the news lately. The old adobe building where Hilton created many of his masterpieces was scheduled for demolition by the Bureau of Land Management. They said that the ranch building has had so many additions that it lacks historical significance. Dos Palmas is located near North Shore. The decision has now been reversed by public outcry.

Between 1938 and 1942 Hilton observed the desert view from the rooftop sundeck. He used beeswax in his oil paints and applied them with a palette knife. He would hold a New Years ceremony with friends in which he would burn canvases in the ranch house fire place. In Hilton's estimation, these particular paintings did not live up to his ideals of how he thought the natural desert should look. Like almost every other artist, he was never satisfied with his work ... being his own best critic.

Hilton also acted as desert guide for General Patton at the Desert Training Center. They scouted out locations for tank training maneuvers at Camp Young during World War II. For those of you familiar with Randall Henderson's "Desert Magazine", you know that John Hilton wrote many of the articles in that publication. He was a gifted person who probably used all of his talents.

PALM DESERT IS GROWING

By Dick Folkers, Historical Society president

At the Chamber of Commerce breakfast in July, John Wohlmuth who is the executive director of C.V.A.G. talked about the growth in Coachella Valley. There were particular insights into statistics for the City of Palm Desert. The current residential population numbers 50,000 with a projection of 70,000 by 2030. The median age is 48 years, and this figure is dropping as younger families move to the area. Housing has a median cost of $429,000 per residence, with 2.14 persons per household.

Palm Desert employers have the highest number of employees in the valley with a total of 35,653. The unemployment rate is 2.8%. Businesses in the city generate over a billion dollars in taxable sales.The transportation needs and traffic congestion are certainly concerns. Palm Desert is fortunate that all the arterials crossing the Union Pacific Railroad are grade separated, because the amount of rail traffic is increasing. In fact, the railroad will be adding a third set of tracks to handle freight.

CAMERA EXHIBIT

Of particular interest to you "shutter bugs" is a new display of antique cameras. These cover a wide range of Palm Desert's history, from a professional piece used by Rheo Lawman in her work for the Palm Desert Post to more modern smaller versions donated to the Society. If you have a very old camera you would like to add to this collection, please contact us at 346-6588.

DESERT PLACE NAMES

Compiled by Tracy Scott for Desert Magazine in 1938 & 1939

Cahuilla	(kay wee' yah) a Shoshonean tribe or dialect group of San Gorgonio Pass and the Colorado Desert also a reservation in Riverside County. Word means "master." Name of clear water lake which once occupied below-sea level basin in Imperial Valley.
Modeno (or) Morena	Spanish word for "tanned" or "swarthy." Lake in San Diego which was stocked with fish and had wild ducks in season. It was popular with anglers and hunters.
Carriso	(kar-ree'-so) Tall grass used by Indians in basketry and also to produce a kind of sugar. An 11-mile canyon between San Diego & Imperial Valley. A railroad skirts its side about half way up the canyon wall. Fossils of Atlantic Ocean corals were found near the end of the gorge.
Edom	Hebrew word for "red." Once applied to an area from the Dead Sea southward. Given to this California settlement because the district resembles the territory in Palestine.
Gray's Well	Named for Newt Gray of Holtville. Camp for workers on the plank road across the sand dunes to Yuma. Parts of the road can still be seen curving up and down across the dunes.
Mobley Meadows	In Imperial County, was named for a pioneer and first sheriff in 1907. He hung this sign: "County Jail. Keep out!"
Tortuga	(tor too' gah) Spanish for "turtle" or "terrapin." Many desert turtles were found 12 miles east of Nilland, far from any visible water supply.
Banning	Laid out by Dr. Welwood Murray of Palm Springs and named in honor of his friend Phineas Banning, founder of a stage line in 1852.
San Bernardino	Originally an institution of pawn shops for the poor; Padre Garces called the vicinity San Jose in 1776. Padre Dumetz renamed it to San Bernardino in 1810. The Indians previously called the Valley Guachama, meaning "plenty to eat." A square mile townsite was laid out by the Mormons in 1853.

NEW MEMBERS

Individual

Linda Fayette	Jess Henry	Inez Murdock	Paul Snyder
Victoria Fleischer	Frank Marra	Cathy Scott	Marti Steadman

Correction: In the summer issue, "Valerie El Farrah" was misspelled.

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DECEASED MEMBERS

Robert Owen Alvin Rickard Shirley Smith

The Board of Directors and Membership of the Society extend sincere sympathy to families and friends.
Memorial gifts for the continuance of our work are deeply appreciated.

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THIMBLES

Remember that old-fashioned sewing aid your grandma used? Thimbles are still used today, especially by ladies who enjoy quilting. Some people collect them, both metal and ceramic. We are looking for donations of thimbles or for members who would like to let us borrow their collection on a temporary basis. Whether you have only one or a dozen, please help us with this new exhibit. Call Anne Tuttle at 346-6588 for details.

NEW SIGN FOR THE MUSEUM

As you may have noticed, the faded sign in the Society's front yard has not yet been replaced.
We have received $1,000 to help cover the $2,000 expense.
A contribution to this worthy fund would be very much appreciated.

VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION

Sunday -- November 11 -- 11:00 a.m.

This event will also include the dedication of the Freedom Park, located off Country Club Drive, 1/4 mile east of Oasis Club Drive/Tamarisk Row Drive. The park is behind the new Ronald Reagan Elementary School. The City of Palm Desert invites the public to join in the celebration of this national holiday.

FIRE HOUSE YARD SALE

Saturday and Sunday -- Nov. 3 and 4
7:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.

Barbara Keedy Eastes and Jackie Damron are co-chairing this annual event. The date is fast approaching. We have quite a collection of saleable items already, but we can use more. If you haven't yet cleaned out those items you no longer use, please consider doing so and donating them to the Historical Society. It's a whole lot easier to donate and receive a charitable donation receipt for your income tax than it is to organize and set up a garage sale. The only items we **do not want** are: used clothing and shoes, bed pillows and mattresses, computers and technical equipment. Your donations can be dropped off in the Society's backyard, or you can call Anne at 346-6588 for an appointment to have them picked up.

This function is the Society's largest fund-raiser. We need your help in performing all facets of this event. Last year it earned $7,000 and we hope to top that figure this year. You can help by picking up donations, sorting, pricing, setting up, customer service, cashiers, etc. Also ask your friends and neighbors to donate their discards and shop at this weekend sale. This is a fun way to support the Society's work.

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ANNUAL FALL LUNCHEON

Special Program to Honor Society Volunteers
Wednesday -- October 24

This event will be held at the lovely Marrakesh Country Club. Beginning with a social hour at 11:00 a.m., luncheon will be served at noon in the main dining room at a cost of $30. The program will consist of recognition for the loyal docents who keep the museum open and interesting for visitors, and volunteers who work behind the scenes on a daily basis. Another special feature will be a show of old-fashioned clothing, mostly from the Marian Henderson collection ... both from her movie career days and what she wore here in the desert. This social event is being co-chaired by Bev Bergh and Helli Harrison -- the fashion show coordinator is Liz Hastings. You won't want to miss this unique affair, and it is a great opportunity to treat that special friend. Watch for your invitation in the mail.

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GOLF CART PARADE

"Trick or Treat...Desert Style"
Sunday -- October 28 -- 1:00 p.m.

Start the day off with a luscious pancake breakfast served by the Palm Desert Rotary Club beginning at 7:00 a.m. It is fun to browse the golf cart floats early and take pictures along El Paseo before the parade starts at l:00 p.m. The Society's entry will be at the end of the parade as usual. A decoration scheme consistent with the theme is being considered for the antique fire truck. No definite decision has been made, so it will be a surprise.

HOLIDAY WREATH LIGHTING AND ORNAMENT CONTEST

Friday -- November 30 -- 5:30 p.m.

This is a delightful social event sponsored by the City of Palm Desert which will get the whole family in the Christmas mood. It will be held at the new Visitor's Center and will feature a special program, carolers, Christmas cookies, hot chocolate and coffee. Create an unusual ornament to enter into the contest. Plan to come, mix and mingle with your neighbors, and prime up for the coming holidays.

CHAMBER POT EXHIBIT

When Bob (who loaned the Society all the antique firefighting equipment in our main exhibit) and Carolyn Green moved out of the desert, Carolyn left her collection of antique chamber pots with the Society to be used in an exhibit. Our lack of available room has slowed down our progress on this project, but Hal Rover and Don Graybill are now in the process of setting up the display. Younger folks will find out how the "indoor plumbing" worked in the old days.

COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT DISPLAY

Hal Rover has been working with C.V.W.D staff members to set up an exhibit at the fire house museum. After talking with Mark Beuhler, Assistant General Manager for the Water District, at a water symposium, Hal got the project underway with Jack Parrelli, Dennis Mohr and Robert Keeran. It is to be located in the cabinet to the left of the front door and will denote the value and necessity of water conservation, and sources and uses of water in the Coachella Valley.

2007 MINI-MUSTER FIRE SAFETY PROGRAM

October is "Fire Safety Month", and that's when the Society sponsors its annual program for third graders each year. In cooperation with the Fire Department and Desert Sands Unified School District, local school children enjoy and learn from this community out-reach event. The Society's loyal and hard-working co-chairs, John and Madonna Marman, have again organized this year's program.

Each year since 1993 the Society has coordinated this program. Firefighters provide and operate "hands on" team type field activities which take place in the morning of "Mini-Muster Day" from 9:15 a.m.-12:00 noon at individual schools. From 1:00-2:00 p.m. an "awards assembly" convenes with Smokey the Bear and Sparky the Dog.

The schedule is:	Tuesday, Oct. 2	Carter School	Thursday, Oct. 11	Lincoln School
	Thursday, Oct. 4	Washington School	Tuesday, Oct. 16	Ford School
	Tuesday, Oct. 9	Reagan School		

Volunteers are invited to help out at any one or all of the five programs. Things to be done are varied and you can be assigned to whatever you enjoy doing. The mothers of students at each school prepare delicious lunches for the volunteers. This is an excellent opportunity to interact with the children and let them know how important fire safety is for everyone. To volunteer call Anne at 346-6588, or the Marmans at 346-1755, or JohnMarman@gmail.com.

SCHOOL TOURS
Chaired by Hal Rover

Scheduled tours:	James Carter Elementary	Nov. 8 and Nov. 9
	Ronald Reagan Elementary	Dec. 3 and Dec. 6
Not yet scheduled:	Abraham Lincoln Elementary	Gerald Ford Elementary
	George Washington Charter	Sacred Heart Elementary

Volunteers are needed to help out with school tours. For those who enjoy working with children this is a unique opportunity to get involved. Retired school teachers are especially invited and very much appreciated. If you would like to join us, please call 346-6588.

"THOSE WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS"

You have probably heard this phrase a hundred times, and may even have used it yourself. This term is most often applied to the years from the end of the Civil War to the early 1900s. This period of history seems to have faded into a benevolent haze, so that we think of an America of innocence, fun and charm. This subject is addressed in a book titled "The Good Old Days - They were Terrible!" by Otto L. Bettmann.

Our present complaints have virtually no basis compared to the conditions that existed in those bygone years. Air pollution was especially bad in some of the large cities where animals ran free, and industrial waste was pumped into the air. Other subjects addressed in the book are traffic, housing, rural life, work, crime, food and drink, health, education, travel, and leisure. The good old days undoubtedly had some good points. We in our human tendency to pick out the negatives of our current existence should remember the hardships of the old days, and be grateful for the blessings of living in America today.

MEMBERSHIP

Tell your friends to buy their membership now while the cost is low. Remember to bring potential members to the "Art and Wine" celebration on September 29, because a newly paid membership will admit them free of charge.

The current member dues are as follows:	Individual $20	Family $25	Supporting $50
	Contributing $100	Patron $250	Lifetime $1000
	Business/Organization:	1st year $75 -- Renewal $50	

Think about an individual Lifetime Membership for $1000, which will cover you while you are alive. The price of everything is going up and it costs the Society more every year to operate the museum and cover our archival collections. We will be forced in the very near future to raise our membership dues. The sale is on now!

THE HENDERSON COLLECTIONS

As we review old documents - We learn new things.

Many of us at the historical museum have been sorting what was left to the Society by the Clifford and Marian Henderson estate (thanks to Marian's daughter Cathy Scott.) We may get tired of processing these items, but at the same time we are excited by the events in local history that we did not fully understand. The Henderson collections which will be available to the public after they are processing into archival status will be very revealing to those who choose to read them. The first, collection #36, was rescued from a flood and stored in boxes at the Society. The second, collection #111, was the content of 9 files from Cliff's office. The third and fourth, collection #153 and #154 came from the Henderson residence on Pinyon Street after Marian's death last November. Collections # 36 and #153 are being used as part of our #02 General Collection, using a PD prefix. Collections #111 and #154 are being used for the Henderson Collection, using a CWH prefix. Research of these particular documents will reveal important aspects of Clifford W. Henderson's life and of Palm Desert's local history.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 29, Sat.	Society's 30th Anniversary "Art & Wine"	Fire House	5-7 p.m.
Oct. 24, Wed.	Fall Luncheon - honors volunteers/fashion show	Marrakesh C.C.	11 a.m.
Oct. 28, Sun.	Golf Cart Parade & Rotary Pancake Breakfast	El Paseo	1 p.m.
Nov. 3 & 4, Sat/Sun.	Firehouse Yard Sale	Society	7:00 to 2:00
Nov. 11, Sun.	Veterans Day - Freedom Park dedication	Freedom Park	11 a.m.
Nov. 30, Fri.	Holiday Wreath Lighting/ornament contest	Visitor's Center	5:30 p.m.

Ginny Folkers, editor

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